

CATHOLIC THEATRE

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OFF-BROADWAY, BUT NOT FAR

Introducing the Paulist Players

Some critics today might say that good Catholic theatre is at least several hundred miles from Broadway, but the truth is that Catholic theatre is comfortably seated less than six blocks from the theatre district, right on Park Avenue, in the advertising offices of Marschalk and Pratt in the person of Richard J. Cusack.

For after working hours, Mr. Cusack becomes a part of the community theatre group known as the Paulist Players of the Good Shepherd parish in New York.

According to statistics compiled by a number of educators doing research on the "Plight of the American Theatre," it would appear that Broadway is being re-located as the center of theatre activity in America. While the number of operating Broadway houses have dwindled, the number of regional and community theatres have grown.

The Paulist Players started with a \$500.00 grant from the pastor just three years ago. Thirty parishioners responded to a call for volunteers interested in community theatre, and the group began their activity with three one-act plays. From this limited program, the Players successfully produced *Jenny Kissed Me*, *The Man Who Came to Dinner*, *Night Must Fall*, *Out of the Frying Pan*, *Harvey*, *Our Town* and their lenten production, *The Upper Room*. This year's program includes *The Righteous Are Bold*, *My Three Angels*, and the Agatha Christie thriller, *The Mouse Trap*.

In addition to producing good theatre on a community level, the Paulist Players have not failed to call upon the advertising abilities of their membership. The Players have wisely launched a program of community relations designed to "build the Paulist Player image as a vital part of parish life."

"Each month," reports Mr. Cusack, "we run a two-page, picture-caption story in the format of *Life* on some aspect of the player's work. The stories appear in the *Good Shepherd*. No sell, strictly 'low pressure.'"

From the original thirty, the Paulist Players now number 80 active members. Most of these members are from 20 to 35 years of age. More than half are female, and near 90% are single. By day they are space salesmen, secretaries, nurses, maintenance men, carpenters, copywriters, film editors and accountants. Not to mention the solitary fireman and the dancing teacher.

They have a new lighting board and a professionally-trained production man. "So," comments Mr. Cusack, "we expect big things from it in the future."

They have also hired a professional director for *The Righteous Are Bold*, and the membership is presently looking for a professional director who would stage their productions on a fee basis.

Their season is determined by a play selection committee

(Continued on page 10.)



The Potting Shed

Melodrama. 3 acts

by GRAHAM GREENE

6 men
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—
3 interiors

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A suspense story of high intellectual calibre, this begins with the return of an unwanted son at the time his father is on his death-bed. His mother will not permit him to see his father in his last moments, and he is estranged from every member of the family. Why? What had he ever done? The key apparently is in an event that happened in the potting shed when he was 14 years old. The son's mind is a blank on the subject; his mother is silent; his psychiatrist meets a stone wall. Beginning with the widow of the old gardener, proceeding to the church where his uncle is pastor, and ending in a family Christmas reunion, the son pieces together the total intelligence about that dark event in the potting shed. "A detective story for grownups . . . Brilliantly wrought entertainment . . . It has bite, it has drive, it has wit."—*N. Y. World Telegram and Sun*.

American Portrait *(The Story of Father Hecker)*

by EMMET LAVERY. With music by ROBERT E. MOONAN.

Something new for the theatre beyond Broadway: a "reading" play for a stage without scenery. Planned for two Choruses (men's choir and women's choir) and Orchestra, the play is a lively addition to Americana. The play takes its story line from the life of Father Hecker, founder of the Paulist Fathers. In a style reminiscent of *John Brown's Body* and *Drama Quartet*, it covers one hundred years of American history in two acts and some rousing choruses. The score begins and ends with the *Last Gospel* of St. John. 9m., 2w. in Part 1; 14m., 3w. in Part 2. (Five principal roles in each act; three men carry over from the first act; several of the secondary roles can be doubled. Modern dress. No make-up. No scenery. Can be produced with or without music.

To be published
January 1959.

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Balloting for the Constitution—the National Catholic Play Festival—organization of committees—revision of the membership brochures and play lists—regional and unit activities—Convention plans: these are some of the items on the desk which I will report upon as developments occur. Permit me, meanwhile, to make an observation in connection with a recent theatre experience.

In mid-September it was my good fortune in company with Father Arthur Harvey, C.S.C. of Notre Dame to attend the final performances of the Shakespeare Festival at Stratford, Canada. Mrs. Wyatt had written to me enthusiastically about Jason Robard's "rousing" Hotspur. "Rousing" was the exact word for the vigorous, sword-flashing HENRY IV; but I must confess that we were more impressed with the WINTER'S TALE which leaves one with the feeling: why isn't this done more frequently?

Before the performance we also had an opportunity to tour the backstage area of what Walter Kerr has called the most original and exciting theatre on this continent. At the very outset in the basement workshops we were not only intrigued by the unusual order and neatness of the props and costumes but we were also interested in the exclusive use of Celastic in the making of helmets and shields. After a study of the dimmer on the mid-floor (which is remotely controlled, the electrician has never been able to see a performance in six years), we climbed to see the position of the spots in the circular dome. We were surprised to find that 1000 watt Pageant lights (British-make spots) are the chief light source with 700 watt Lekos supplementing the Pageants. No gelatines are used on these lights so that costumes do not change color and are consequently made in rooms flooded with daylight. Variations in lighting effects are achieved solely by selective spotting and variation of the dimmer readings.

Beyond the excitement of examining the theatre and stage, the most interesting feature of the Festival was the fact that the matinee audience was composed almost exclusively of students from the Provinces. Not only the enthusiasm of the students during the performance but also their questions afterwards indicated the keen attention and admiration of the youngsters. In fact, the students audiences were the favorite audiences of the Festival players.

The thought occurred to me that we should not underestimate the ability of our students to respond to the best and most exacting standards of art. Youth recognizes quality; it despises pretense at quality. We should not fear

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to offer and demand the best of youth in theatre. These are the audiences of tomorrow; we shall reap as we sow.

It has been heartening, then, to receive such comments as "we are thrilled with the handbook" . . . "I am happy to belong to your distinguished organization." Unsolicited comments like these in our mail convince me that we will have full scale cooperation with the affiliate program outlined in our new handbooks. This type of cooperation cannot fall short of making our college and secondary students quality-conscious; and to teach them to aim at high standards is to whet their appetite for the beautiful.

It will not, however, be sufficient to demand the best of our youth unless we give proof of our own dedication and conviction by loyal adoption of national programs and eager participation in research committee work. Quality will not come and tap you on the shoulder in the last week of rehearsal; it is a treasure for which you must actively dig. Take a moment out and look at the people who consistently do excellent work in drama. Invariably, you will find that they are the most active of NCTC members. They are members whose generous cooperation is vibrant evidence of their conviction that Catholic theatre is an apostolate.

Faithfully in St. Genesius,

Father Gabriel, S.O.S.



THE DAYTON BLACKFRIARS GUILD presented "The Desk Set" this past season starring Patrick Young and Anne Callahan (above). Al E. Bonner directed.



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Your Community Theatres

A number of good, Catholic community theatres in America have sprung up literally over night and made genuine strides in establishing a truly regional theatre. With how many are you acquainted?

The Catholic Theatre Guild of Indianapolis is one of the more active groups in the country. This summer they sponsored a workshop for their community, and presented *Murder Will Out* at the October meeting. Offered in their workshop were courses in pantomime, character construction, stage terminology, make-up, speech and stagecraft. This group also publishes the two-page paper, *Cue*, every month.

The Catholic Theatre Guild of Richmond publishes a monthly bulletin for their community listing the current plays suitable and not suitable for Catholic viewing. This will be their 23rd season.

The Theatre Guild of St. Thomas More Parish in Decatur, Georgia, has just completed their most successful year to date. Their membership now is above 80 active participants and "a like number" of children. Their production of *Song of Bernadette* last year went "touring" on invitation, played Atlanta and currently Macon. This season they have scheduled *The Desperate Hours* and *Little Women*.

The Catholic Theatre Guild of Mobile, under the able leadership of Father Anthony Zoghby is well-known. They do a full season of current Broadway hits sprinkled with "classic" American fare; and last season they presented

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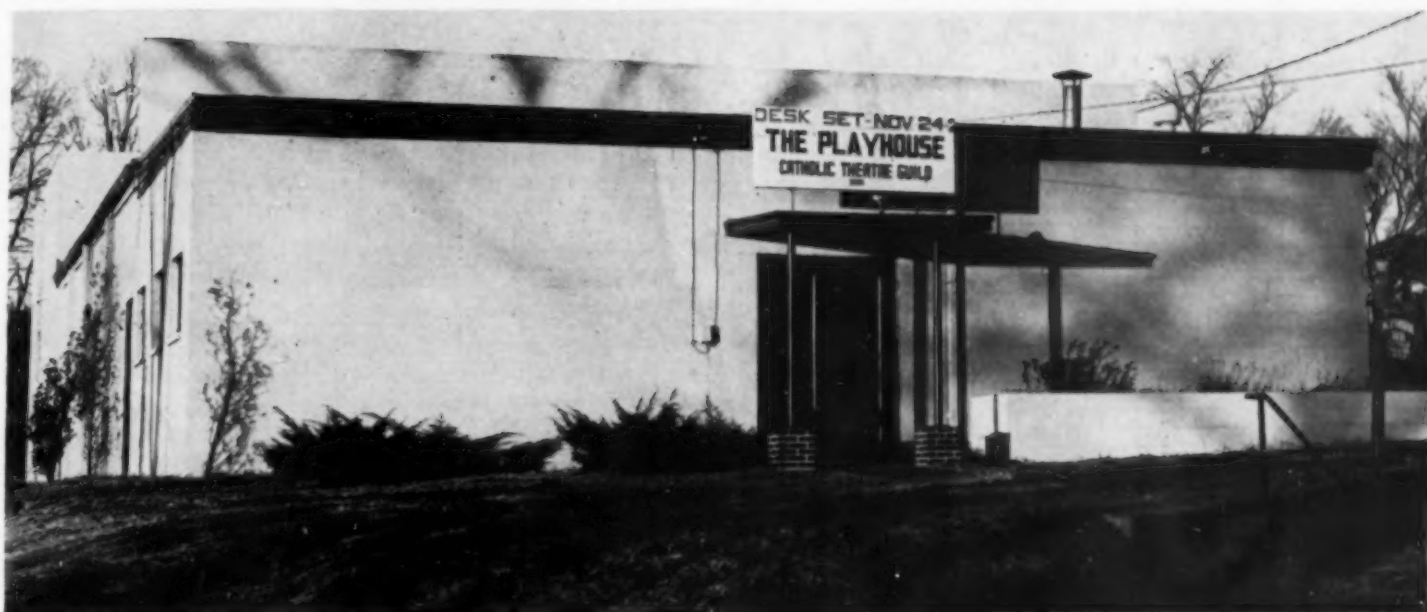
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Father Zoghby's own version of Joan of Arc, Heroine on Fire.

The Dayton Blackfriars' Guild is celebrating their twentieth season of good theatre. They also publish a monthly report called The Friarcracker. Past successes have included Angel Street, Stardust, and many more familiar works.

The Catholic Theatre Guild of Evansville, Indiana, are the proud possessors of the new playhouse shown above. Only eight years old this season, the Guild played first in neighboring high schools, then they built a clubhouse called lovingly, The Barn. Now their new theatre seats 400, has a large stage, lobby, and a basement club room—and best of all, a parking lot.

They also sponsor the Catholic University touring group, Players Incorporated, and have sent representatives and scenes to the play festivals in Terre Haute, Indianapolis, South Bend, and Whiting.

Currently listing 200 active members and 250 inactives, the Guild has organized committees for play selection, casting, and play presentation. Their current season will include The Potting Shed, The Little World of Don Camillo, and the Matchmaker.

The Philopatrian Theatre Guild of Philadelphia is twelve years old this season, currently number 60 active members and about 50 inactive supporters. Governed by a Board of Trustees comprising fifteen members, the Guild sponsors a season "program book" with advertising and patrons. This basic text is used throughout the entire year, changing title and cast for each production.

These are typical of the many hundreds of Catholic community theatres fighting against rising costs and general waves of instability—particularly where there is no definite playhouse owned by the group—to bring Catholic theatre to those who look for something better than nihilism and pessimism.



THE MOBILE THEATRE GUILD produced a highly successful "The Little World of Don Camillo" as part of their 1957-58 season. Seven other productions, including "The Bat," "Antigone," "Jane Eyre" and "Reclining Figure" completed the season.

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REPORT: *The Playwrighting Workshop*

by Donald Hugh Dickinson, Loyola University

At a drama competition last year, I met Father Stapleton for the second time. We exchanged cigarets in the lobby, groped our way back into the auditorium, and sat—with growing glumness—through a one-act play. On my part, at least, the glumness changed to acute depression; Father Stapleton, I suspect, is better inured to these things!

The play we were watching was morally irreproachable—and spiritually empty. In fact, it was so vacuous that I couldn't understand why it didn't collapse from sheer atmospheric pressure. Watching it became like a problem in physics, until I realized there is not really a vacuum—not even in the hollowest play. It is filled with something. But what?

This one celebrated a kind of idiot worship of material success in its flashiest forms. It was, remember, morally irreproachable; it interested the theatre full of young people; and, I think, it spoke to them subtly and effectively. Why? Mostly because it never mentioned the thing it was really saying. It expressed a point of view; or, rather—and this is where it was so subtle, it *assumed* a point of view without ever stating it.

In doing so, the play implied—and approved—a whole system of values, all of them material. But those values were so completely taken for granted by the playwright that I dare say even he was totally unaware of their implications. Yet the assumptions he was making without even thinking about it, enabled him to write with complete conviction. So that the thing his play communicated best was never stated!

Well, I proceeded to state it at some length to Father Stapleton, only to find that he was well aware of it. It was the very sort of thing, he said, that the National Catholic Theatre Conference should combat—but combat in positive fashion.

One answer he had for it was to give stimulation and encouragement to a truly Christian, humanist drama, by having the Conference sponsor a Catholic Playwriting Workshop. The next thing I knew, Loyola University was asked to be host to the first such workshop, and I was asked to be its chairman.

Now, upon completion of the workshop, it is my task as chairman to give you a brief interim report. It must begin by expressing my genuine thanks to Father Urban Nagle, O.P., and Sister Mary Olive, S.P., who were my colleagues on the workshop committee; and to Natalie White and Emmet Lavery, who served on the play-reading committee that screened the applicants. Workers all; and good workers, too. They made me truly grateful that, in the workshop, I could profit so directly from their generous dedication to the National Catholic Theatre Conference.

The conduct of the workshop was simply conceived: first, a speaker for each of the five days; second, two seminars each day; and third, private conferences between committee members and individual playwrights. Let me take them in that order.

I will not try to summarize the views of the speakers here. More interesting to me was the individual impact each speaker had on the playwriting group, and the stimulus of his or her views, vigorously expressed. Since a large proportion of the members had written plays without the benefit of previous formal study or technical training in playwriting principles; and since some had had much less experience of theater than of dramatic literature, it was especially good that the speakers they heard were experienced theatre-workers, tackling prob-

(Continued on page 8.)



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REPORT: *On A Working Playwright*

by Patricia Herman

Because of an almost transparent post script in a letter from Father Gabriel Stapleton to the editor, that would have been overlooked by the majority of letter-readers, I find myself taking pencil in hand (the pen is out of ink, and we have no more since the baby decided to paint the studio floor blue-black) to write a biography introducing my husband to the conference membership.

Now this is really a little foolish, because, as everyone knows, the one person in the world that knows the least about a man is the woman he married.

Of course I can give you a few statistics, such as where and when he was born, his weight, height, coloring, size, occupation, and so forth; but then a glance at his birth certificate or insurance policy would yield the same information.

Still, knowing that the aforementioned documents are safely lost someplace in a very untidy desk, I shall supply the statistics: My husband, George Adam Herman (hereafter referred to as "he" or "him" or "that man") was born of parents in Norfolk, Virginia, in the year 1928, which, no matter what the present date, makes him 29 for the 2nd consecutive year.

His parents (bless their patient souls) reside in Baltimore, Maryland. He was educated at Loyola College in Baltimore, Boston College in you-can-guess, and Catholic University in Washington, D. C.

From the top of his sparsely (brown hair?) covered pate to the floor is a distance of five feet, ten and one-half inches. His eyes are two, both sea-green. His weight is non-existent, 132 pounds soaking wet. (We expect another child in January

so I outweigh him at present by a good fifteen pounds.) Actually, it's a sort of Jack Sprat arrangement under normal conditions. His occupation is giving of himself.

He is a teacher, playwright, editor, chairman, director, producer, stage technician, critic, advisor, husband and father.

He is busy.

He teaches at Clarke College, an all-girls' school. He has a sympathetic ear.

He is very busy.

His energy seems to know no bounds. He's capable of keeping up with a twenty-month old Indian whom we fondly (on good days) refer to as "our son, Kurt." I shall not mention what he's referred to on bad days.

It only took the nurses a few days after he was born to change the tag from "Kurt Michael Herman" to "Squirm-in' Herman." It's difficult to understand how they could have been so right in such a short time. We didn't discover it until we got him home. Anyway, I mention this fact only to further illustrate the energy of the male parent. After a few hours of just watching our monster, I'm a heap; but George is still able to romp and wrestle with him.

There is another facet of his (we leave Kurt here and return to the man who claims *he* married *me*) personality that is really quite awesome. That is his discipline. (We obviously are not discussing Kurt any further.)

During the three months of his summer "vacation," I've known him to write a complete musical comedy (book, music, and lyrics), a full-length play, several very scholarly articles

(Continued on page 14.)



At the request of Father Stapleton, Patricia (Mrs. George) Herman has prepared this introduction of her husband to the NCTC membership. Mr. Herman has recently been appointed the new editor of CATHOLIC THEATRE, and national director of both the Catholic Playwrights Circle and the National Catholic Play Festival. Mrs. Herman enjoys a reputation as a professional singer, actress, stage designer and director. Her last appearance on the stage—excepting her appearance as the lepracaun in O'Halloran's Luck at the Eau Claire regional NCTC meeting last fall—was in the Catholic University musical Huck Finn. Receiving good reviews from the Washington critics, she completed her victory by marrying the author.

COLLEGE CALENDAR

Prepared
by
Sister
Mary
Olive, S.P.

COLLEGE	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER	JANUARY
Alverno Milwaukee, Wis.		Antigone by Anouilh		
Clarke Dubuque, Iowa	Brighten the Corner (Reader's Theatre)	Smell of Cinnamon by George Herman	Mime in Theatre (Lecture-Recital)	Mime in Theatre by George Herman
Emmanuel Boston, Mass.		Blithe Spirit by Noel Coward		
Incarnate Word San Antonio, Texas	The Raveled Sleeve by Helen Parker	Mary's Message (Pageant)	Story of the First Christmas (Cantata with pantomime)	Mime in Theatre by George Herman
Immaculate Heart Hollywood, Calif.	Out of The Boobly's Box by S. M. Fleurette, I.H.M. (Children's Theatre)	The Fence (Student written and directed)	Everyman (Dance-drama)	
Manor Philadelphia, Penna.				
Marygrove Detroit, Mich.	Theatre Day (Detroit Unit)	Cindrella (Children's Theatre)		
Marymount Los Angeles, Calif.		The Chalk Circle (14th Cent. Chinese)		
St. Francis Joliet, Ill.		The Heiress by Goetz		
St. Joseph's Philadelphia, Penna.			Othello by Shakespeare	
St. Louis University St. Louis, Mo.	Charley's Aunt by Brandon Thomas		Death of a Salesman by Arthur Miller	An Evening George Bernard Shaw
St. Mary of the Springs Columbus, Ohio	The Torchbearers by George Kelly			
St. Mary-of-the-Woods St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Ind.		Mrs. McThing by Mary Chase		
St. Xavier Chicago, Ill.		The Heiress by Goetz	A Child is Born by Stephen Vincent Benet	
St. Procopius Lisle, Ill.	Detective Story by Sidney Kingsley		A Light for The Darkness (Oratorio with ballet)	
Webster Webster Groves, Mo.		The Chalk Garden by Enid Bagnold		
Georgetown University Washington, D. C.	The Caine Mutiny Ct. Martial by Herman Wouk	The Madwomen of Chaillot by Jean Giradoux (Nursing School)		
St. Benedict's Atchison, Kansas	The Living Room by Graham Greene		Ah, Wilderness by Eugene O'Neill	
St. Mary's Notre Dame, Indiana		Plain and Fancy by Stein and Glickman	The Miracle of Theophilus (French medieval miracle)	
Regis Weston, Mass.		The Torchbearers George Kelly	Christmas play (Original one-act)	
San Diego University San Diego, Calif.		Ten Little Indians Agatha Christie		

The Playwrighting Workshop . . .

lems from a variety of angles and speaking with the authority of their considerable experience.

The problems included dramatic forms, the limitations of the medium, creation in terms of the medium and the exploitation of its resources, morality and censorship as they affect the playwright and his work, translating and adapting old plays and new, the Catholicity—or lack of it—in American drama; the materials and scope available to the Catholic playwright, the market for Catholic plays, and publishing procedures.

That's quite a list of topics—not just touched on but probed and examined at length in the lectures. To tick them off this way fails completely to suggest the variety and far-reaching implications of what was said. Even when they differed, our speakers knew whereof they spoke; and it was wonderful to me to see how often during the course of the week, and sometimes unexpectedly, one speaker supplemented

and reinforced the views of another. Ideas and issues jostled together, and began to strike chords and to define themselves. I think the stimulus they gave the workshop members, though it cannot be measured, was unmistakable. I believe it fully justified this part of the workshop as Father Stapleton first proposed it.

As for the seminars, they benefited from the stimulus I have just mentioned, although their purpose was purely technical and designed to bring the playwrights to see their plays as material to be handled and shaped, and to suggest ways in which this could be done. I now think that, to provide the playwrights more time to work, and the committee members more time for private conferences, one such seminar daily would be better than two. There seemed to be a kind of moral compulsion to attend, which is undesirable. A workshop is fulfilling its function simply by providing the playwright time and place to work, an occasional help or criticism; and he may be accomplishing more by working on his play than trying

JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH	APRIL	MAY
		J. B. by Archibald Macleish	The Lady's Not For Burning by Christopher Fry	Three one-Act Plays (Student directed)
Murder in the Cathedral by T. S. Eliot	The Princess with Big Feet (Children's Theatre)	Medieval Theatre (Lecture-production)	Two One-Act Plays (Student written and directed)	Carnival of Thieves by Anouilh (arena)
			Twelve Angry Women by Reginald Rose	
		As You Like It by Shakespeare (Directed by Robert Speaight)	Laboratory Production (Student directed)	To be announced (Major production)
	One-Act Play Nite "Recognition Scene"—Anastasia plus 2 others to be announced			
	Dear Brutus by J. M. Barrie		To be announced (Children's Theatre)	To be announced by Shakespeare
			Oedipus Rex (In translation)	
An Evening with George Bernard Shaw		Everyman by Hofmannsthal	Love Scenes— Athens to Broadway	The Boy Friend by Sandy Wilson
			To be announced (Major production)	
		The Skin of Our Teeth, by Thornton Wilder, Reader's thea.	Iolanthe (Americanized) by Gilbert and Sullivan	The Chalk Garden by Enid Bagnold
	Cindrella of Loreland, Francis Homer (Children's Theatre)			To be announced (Musical Comedy)
			Oklahoma! by Rogers and Hammerstein	
	Oklahoma! by Rogers and Hammerstein		Antigone by Anouilh	
	Three One-Act Plays (Original)	Capt. Brassbound's Conversion by George Bernard Shaw	Anyone Mind? (Original Musical Revue)	
		To be announced (Musical)		To be announced by Shakespeare
		The Song of Bernadette by Jean and Walter Kerr		The Cherry Orchard by Chekhov
		Regional Play Festival (held at Regis)	Evening of One-Act Plays (Original)	Crown in the Dust, Dorothy Kelley (Orig. 3-act)
	One-Act Play Tournament (Student-directed)	The Betrayal (Third annual Passion Play)		Minstrel Mirthquake, II

to fulfill technical exercises, even when these are valuable.

One evening, an original one-act play was given in Readers' Theatre style. This resulted in a spirited discussion that made members wish the same could have been done for all their plays. This is obviously impracticable. But what could be done is this: plays accepted by the workshop committee could be distributed to interested schools, where they could be rehearsed and recorded on tape, and the tape then sent to the workshop for playback during the seminars. These recordings would emphasize the drama latent in the script and provide a common basis for discussion of technical elements and playwriting devices illustrated in them.

As for the private conferences, here again the working playwright should benefit most—not the playwright who has finished a play and fiercely stands by every comma of it, nor the playwright who is "between plays." It would be better, even with a small group (and twenty playwrights are *not* a small group in this type of work!) to schedule all conferences

in advance of the opening of the workshop, and then to hold additional conferences as the need arises. Tighter organizations at the outset, with greater freedom later on.

The difficulty of playwriting is, therefore, in direct ratio to the importance of encouraging Catholic playwrights. I think the workshop hammered at these two ideas. No one could come away from it with the idea that the work was easy; and I dare hope that everyone came away with his awareness of the importance of Catholic drama sharpened and vivified.

It would be unjust to omit to mention the help, and stimulus the workshop members provided one another—and the committee. The contributions they made to discussions, the variety of experiences they pooled, and the dialectic of debate—all these added to the value of the work, with the unexpectedness of life itself. After all, it is the playwrights themselves who are the whole reason for the workshop's being.

Artistic creation is a strange, a secret process. Who can

(Continued on page 12.)

The Paulist Players . . .



. . . demonstrate their varied production talents in Community Theatre. (Top, left) Jack Sherry, George Delaney and Anne Aylwood in a scene from *Rope*. (Top, right) The first Paulist production, *Curse You, Jack Dalton*. (Bottom) Elwood Dowd tries to convince everyone he's perfectly all right in *Harvey*.

The Paulist Players . . .

who submit their suggestions to the general membership for approval. The executive board, all elected officers, appoint a producer for each production, and this recommendation is also submitted to the general membership.

Members to head the various promotion, ticket sales and other committees are chosen by the executive board on the

basis of their experience, length of time as a member, and their ability to get the work done "as efficiently and as economically as possible."

In the beginning, the Paulist Players frequently invited Equity players to read for the key roles in their productions, but decided that "membership morale suffers when old hands feel they are being passed over." The present policy of the Players is to cast within the membership as far as possible.

AN OPEN LETTER TO CATHOLIC COMMUNITY THEATRES

I once lived in a city which was designated by churchmen, journalists and politicians as an "Irish Catholic city." The Catholic colleges and high schools of this city had excellent dramatic programs. So successful were the schools in stimulating interest in theatre and in the fine arts that the graduates filtered in large numbers into city-wide little theatre groups. There was, however, no Catholic community theatre and many of the Catholic graduates were active members of the Jewish Community theatre.

By a process of logic Catholic community theatres should exist in every community where the schools are at work stimulating cultural interests and creative abilities. We cannot excuse ourselves by maintaining that our primary purpose is not to educate actors and technicians but to train and develop audiences. Great as that objective of developing appreciative audiences may be, there will always be a considerable number of students whose latent dramatic powers will be stimulated to the point where an outlet is necessary.

Although there are those who will grant the social value of interest-groups for Catholics such as community theatre groups, they regard the Catholic community theatre as another manifestation of "ghetto" Catholicism and to that extent as more of a disadvantage from an advantage. But this objection is more glib than profound. The ghetto signifies a closed minority group which folds in upon itself in an attempt to preserve its identity and customs. The ghetto does not proselytize; its very existence is defensive rather than aggressive. Catholicism, on the other hand, is an active dynamic principle of vitality which, like all vital things, grows and in its growth influences its environment.

If we believe that Christ stands at the center of history, then we must agree with Maritain that the task of the Church is to build a Christendom by building a civilization and a culture that is Christ-inspired and Christ-conscious. There are, of course, those like Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., who maintain that Catholicism should not worry about proselytizing *institutions* in a pluralistic society. This latter position, however, cannot be reconciled with the explicit statements of Pius XII that not only individuals but social institutions must be brought beneath the reign of Christ. It is not enough to have "Christophers" in society; there must be organizations devoted to the promotion of Christian truth and morality in the various institutions of society.

A Catholic community theatre has the task of nurturing a Christ-inspired theatre as its contribution toward building a Catholic, rather than a secularistic, culture. As an active leaven, the Catholic community theatre should enrich the community with an art form rooted in Catholic sensibilities.

Why then, do so many of our Catholic community theatres already in existence shy away from religious drama and schedule a season that might represent the play selec-

tions of any non-Catholic community theatre? Is it the fear of slender box-office returns? The success of some of our NCTC community theatres (and I am thinking of two in particular) despite the priority which they give to religious drama indicates that religious drama can be successful financially. The question resolves itself, I feel, into a question of art and skill rather than of finances. As Andre Girard has pointed out, the religious artist must be a superior artist. The content of religious art is so magnificent that shoddy technique becomes all the more evident. Basically the challenge of religious drama is an artistic one.

Catholic community theatres, of course, are expected to do the best of contemporary non-religious drama. But the Catholic community theatre has the added burden of giving to the community what no other community theatre group can either duplicate or contribute—religious drama of the highest artistic calibre. A Catholic community group which does not do at least one challenging religious drama per season fails to justify its existence.

Make no bones about it—the Catholic community theatre has much to suffer in attaining its objectives. Not least among those trials will be the necessity to defend its play selections against the immature criticism which registers profound shock at the portrayal of clerical foibles or sins on stage. In one area, for example, a churchman was indignant that a Catholic group produced *JENNY KISSED ME*. There are certainly few plays as innocuous as this and yet the churchman scored it as anti-clerical and even found its title "suggestive." The Catholic papers also carried the statement of a diocesan superintendent of schools who objected to the growth of the summer theatres since 85% of the plays were not "family" entertainment. Legitimate theatre has never, of course, been a mass entertainment media and although our critics admit that there are books for "adults" and although the Legion of Decency admits that certain films are acceptable for "adults," the particular diocesan official evidently feels that there are no plays for "adults." Objectionable material, of course is a different matter (and there is much of it in summer theatre); but such irresponsible statements as that of the widely-publicized superintendent of schools contribute little toward the growth of Catholic intellectual stature and culture and are a thorn to those engaged in community theatre work.

The encouraging factor, however, is the memory of how far Catholic theatre has advanced. Generally we are far from the immature reactions described by Father Nagle in *BEHIND THE MASQUE* as he outlines the beginning of the Blackfriars movement.

From the Catholic, the social and the creative viewpoints, we have much to gain from the Catholic theatre. But the Catholic community theatre has much to gain from the idealism and the programs of NCTC. Unfortunately, some of the community theatre groups have but a nodding acquaintance with those ideals and programs. The

(Continued on page 12.)

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The Playwrighting Workshop . . .

tell what will trigger it? Or what will affect it? No one can predict the outcome of work begun, or the time and pains that may be needed to bring it to fruition. We cannot know in advance what was accomplished or what its value may be: these things reveal themselves slowly, in diverse ways.

What are the best ways to assist the Catholic playwright in his noble task, one cannot say in detail or with finality. But that he should be assisted, I firmly believe. And I firmly believe that the Catholic Playwriting Workshop '58 was a bold idea, well worth undertaking. I wish to thank Father Stapleton and the National Catholic Theatre Conference for letting me attend its birth. Who knows? With a few sharp slaps applied to its bottom, it may take its first breath and grow up eventually to be a great, strapping creature of which you can indeed be proud—a Christian, humanist drama, indigenous to America.



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The Baker royalty-reduced plays are: CONNECTICUT YANKEE, DESIGN FOR A STAINED GLASS WINDOW, ENCHANTED COTTAGE, SPARK IN JUDEA, VICTORIA REGINA, and YEARS OF THE LOCUSTS.

Open Letter . . .

conference publications arrive and are buried in a secretary's file. The general membership consequently does not imbibe the NCTC *esprit de corps*.

Both NCTC and the Catholic community theatres would be enriched beyond measure by the adoption of a two-fold program: (1) an all-out effort by the respective Presidents to sell their members on affiliate memberships so that the members will individually receive and read and discuss Conference publications; (2) the obtaining of individual members (and not merely of Moderators or Presidents) to work on NCTC research committees. We need, for example, a handbook for community and parish theatres. We need articles articulating the principles, the problems and the discoveries of our Catholic community theatres. We need a project for selling the idea of the Catholic community theatre to those important communities where such theatres are non-existent.

Catholic community theatres are doing splendid, yeoman work in their own backyards. But Catholic theatre *as a movement* is in a bad way. The initiative must come from the community theatres themselves; for they alone possess the know-how. What has been done in the field of educational theatre can be done by the community theatres. Shall we have a Community Theatre Committee? The door is open for volunteers. NCTC stands ready to assist the Catholic community theatre movement. Everything depends on who walks through that doorway.

REV. GABRIEL STAPLETON, SDS
President

A NOTE OF THANKS

Our heartfelt thanks to Robert Smett and to Sister Elizabeth Seton, O.P., for their editorial work of the past year. Because of new duties neither will be on the editorial staff this year. Circulation will now be handled by the Executive Office and not at the College of St. Mary of the Springs.

WHAT HAVE YOU BEEN UP TO?

Each issue of CATHOLIC THEATRE this year will have a central theme. October was the Play Festival Issue, and this is the Community Theatre issue. December will feature College articles and January will highlight the High School membership. February is the Children's Theatre Issue, and March is International Theatre month. April will introduce Technical information, and May will prepare for the August Convention in Notre Dame.

The deadline for each issue is the 15th of two months preceding the publication date. The deadline for the January issue, for example, is November 15th, for the February issue, December 15th. This permits time for checking proofs, paste-up, and mailing so the membership receives the magazine on or about the first of each month. This issue, therefore, should have reached you the first of November. It "went to bed" in September.

Articles dealing with college and university drama activity should be sent directly to Sr. Mary Olive, S.P., Drama Department, St. Mary-of-the-Woods College, St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana. Articles about the Drama Fraternity, Alpha Gamma Omega, should also be sent to Sister.

Feature material and articles concerning high school drama activity should be sent to Sr. Honora, O.P., St. Clement High School, 8075 Ritter Avenue, Center Line, Michigan.



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PLAYWRIGHTS' CIRCLE

The Playwrights Circle is off to a fine start with the announcement of a new play by Mr. Ernest C. Ferlita, S.J., a Circle playwright whose Festival play, **BOLD LION**, has just been re-named **THUNDER ON THE WATERS**.

Mr. Ferlita's new work, a one-act, one-set, three-character play, is called **THREE BODIES IN THE PLAZA** and sets the Antigone theme in the middle of a South American, rebellion-torn republic. Playing off the "president" of the republic who has decreed that the bodies of the rebels should be left in the plaza as a warning to the subversives against his own son who objects to the decree and goes to his death placing a flag over the three bodies, Mr. Ferlita has written a tight, suspense-filled drama. Circle members who wish to examine the script can do so by contacting George Herman at the Circle Executive offices, Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa.

The three Circle playwrights whose works have been selected for publication in conjunction with the NCTC Play Festival have signed their contracts and returned to their typewriters. Alan Jorgensen, author of **A CONTEST OF KINGS**, reports that one nun wished to present the work (which is a story of the Magi and the Christ Child) as **A CONTEST OF QUEENS**, and make Baltazar and his friends women.

Another producing group wished to present the Festival play, **A SMELL OF CINNAMON**, as **THE SCENT OF CINNAMON**; later reversed their opinion when nuns began inquiring about the play, **THE SCENT OF SIMEON**.

RESEARCH MATERIAL NEEDED: Rev. Thomas Carpenter of Loras Academy, Dubuque, Iowa (a change of address from the Circle list mailed to members last month), requests information on the life of the Cure of Ars from the Conference membership. He is presently preparing a play about the Cure and would like the titles of good, accurate texts concerning him. Father Carpenter also notifies us he is re-working **HOW WONDERFUL YOU ARE**, a play concerning his mother in the early Mid-west.

Appointments

Rev. Gilbert Hartke, O.P., Governmental Liaison Officer (Representative to Legislative Assembly).

George Herman, Editor of *Catholic Theatre*; Sister Mary Honora, O.P. and Sister Mary Olive, S.P., Associate Editors (Representatives to Legislative Assembly).

N.B. The new Editorial Office address is: Clarke College, Dubuque, Iowa. Manuscripts and news should be sent to the Editorial Office. All other communications (circulation and advertising) should be sent to the Executive Office.

Working Playwright . . .

complete with foot notes, maybe a one-act play, and answer countless questions, letters, and inquiries. I won't even mention the time he spends reading, but it is every minute that isn't spent writing.

True, there isn't a great deal of physical exercise involved; so, by some standards, none of these things would be considered "work," but gluing the seat of the pants to a chair in front of a typewriter for eight hours a day, day in and day out, could—and should—be exhausting. And I'm sure it must be; but on this man it doesn't show.

He would tell you that it's because he normally looks underfed and emaciated. And he'd be right. The only difference is that when he's *really* exhausted he turns grey. But that, fortunately, doesn't happen too often. The reason is, I think, because his enthusiasm is almost as boundless as his energy.

Besides sleeping with one eye open, which is really true (distrusting as it may seem), he has another nerve-wracking ability; that of watching television and either reading or writing at the same time—one eye on the set and the other two on

whatever else he happens to be doing.

I can only suppose that his brain is equally divided.

Now . . . back to his teaching in an all-girl's school! If one more person nudges me in the ribs and says with that snicker-snicker twinkle in his eye, "So-o-o, your husband teaches in an-all-girls' school!" I'm going to run screaming to the nearest telephone pole and grab a hot wire!

But, outside of being occasionally exasperated, he is generally pleased by the aptitude of the girls, and he has a great deal of respect for them both as students and as women.

I don't know what else I can tell you about this man—except that he is gentle, kind, understanding, patient, generous, good, and that he begets beautiful babies.

Now, you may get the impression from reading this inadequate little biography that he is a man with no faults. If so, I have misled you. He has faults and I know, because I'm perfect and can spot things like that. Besides, I have the bruises to prove it—intellectual bruises, true, but just as deflating. But, though he intellectually brow-beats me, I just laugh, because I can beat him at chess and because *I* know *I'm* a "late bloomer."



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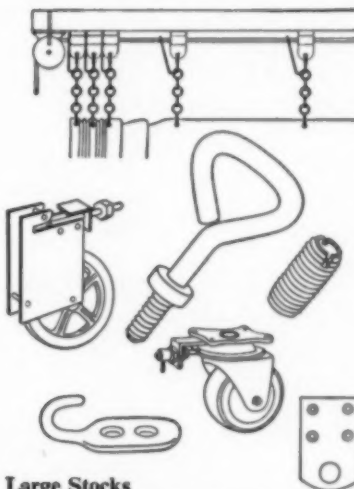
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